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The Horn of Africa: Famine and Refugee Crisis

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A Research Paper

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September 1985*

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A Research Paper

This paper was prepared by [] of the
Office of African and Latin American Analysis. It
was coordinated with the Directorate of
Operations. []

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**The Horn of Africa:
Famine and Refugee Crisis**

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Key Judgments

*Information available
as of 9 September 1985
was used in this report.*

Over the coming year the Horn of Africa—Ethiopia, Sudan, Somalia, and Djibouti—will continue to suffer the effects of one of the region's worst droughts in recorded history, with hundreds of thousands of people facing life-threatening conditions and the regional governments struggling with an array of seemingly intractable problems. The 1.7 million refugees in the region, including some 400,000 who fled Ethiopia over the past year alone, are the most visible victims of famine and political upheaval, but millions more within the countries are also severely affected.

The drought, which has deepened since 1983, is the immediate cause of the unprecedented famine and the crop failures that place some 15 million people—about 20 percent of the population—at risk. We believe the magnitude of the crisis is aggravated by instability throughout the region—civil wars in Ethiopia and Sudan and political conflicts between the states—as well as other factors including severely depressed economies, marginal environments for food production, and inefficient social and political institutions.

In our judgment, Ethiopia will remain the focal point in the crisis over the near term despite brighter weather and crop prospects in 1986. While near normal rains have returned this year, most experts expect next year's food deficit will be almost as large as this year's 1.95-million-ton shortfall and that Ethiopia will require massive emergency food aid at least through 1986.

It is not only the weather that keeps the focus of the famine and refugee crisis on Ethiopia. We believe a primary goal of the Ethiopian Government in Tigray and Eritrea is to defeat the longstanding insurgency. The government's famine relief and resettlement programs are all subordinate to this objective. Thus, in any practical sense, we foresee little softening of President Mengistu's resistance to the international relief effort nor do we see an abatement of the fighting now disrupting farming and food distribution. Further, the government in Addis Ababa does not appear ready or willing to yield on its contention that widespread feeding programs in Tigray and Eritrea would not only aid the insurgents but also confer legitimacy on them. We expect that Mengistu will continue to

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dismiss as politically motivated and hostile most expressions of external concern for the famine-ridden north and that he will remain unsympathetic to the plight of Ethiopian refugees in the neighboring states and the burden they are creating.

Refugee- and drought-induced tensions between Ethiopia and its neighbors will likely escalate over the near term, and cross-border feeding programs from Sudan into northern Ethiopia—an integral part of the US relief effort for the region—will remain at the center of the controversy. As the needs of Ethiopians in militarily contested Eritrea and Tigray increase and the current rainy season comes to a close, the government in Khartoum will be under greater pressure from international agencies to increase the program, despite Addis Ababa's objections. Based on Mengistu's rigid public stance and numerous diplomatic demarches last spring, we believe Ethiopia is prepared to use military force to disrupt the flow of supplies. Moreover, in our judgment, an expanded and therefore more highly publicized cross-border feeding program from Sudan would jeopardize efforts by the new government in Khartoum to improve relations with Ethiopia. Thus, we believe Sudan might risk strong donor objections and cut the program, not only as a gesture of good will to Ethiopia, but also to remove it as a possible pretext for greater Ethiopian mischief. At the same time, a prolonged or an increasingly high US profile in Sudan's food and refugee programs would fan Mengistu's suspicions of US intentions in the region and further strain US relations with Addis Ababa.

From the perspective of the region as a whole, we believe that over the next year thousands of new Ethiopian refugees will further tax the patience of the regional governments over Addis Ababa's failure to provide enough relief aid to keep the refugees at home, but we doubt that they would take any meaningful political or economic action that could provoke their stronger neighbor. As a consequence, we believe appeals to the international community for further emergency aid will increase and that the United States will be expected by the international community and the states in the Horn to be a major player. Somalia and Djibouti, we judge, will look to the United States for more emergency aid to support their growing refugee populations and could expect increases in development aid to pacify their own increasingly restive peoples.

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Over the longer term, we expect donors to require the Horn countries to assume responsibility for planning comprehensive solutions for refugees—either repatriation or permanent resettlement—rather than depending solely on emergency aid. We believe either option would be politically and economically difficult and require international resource commitments over many years.

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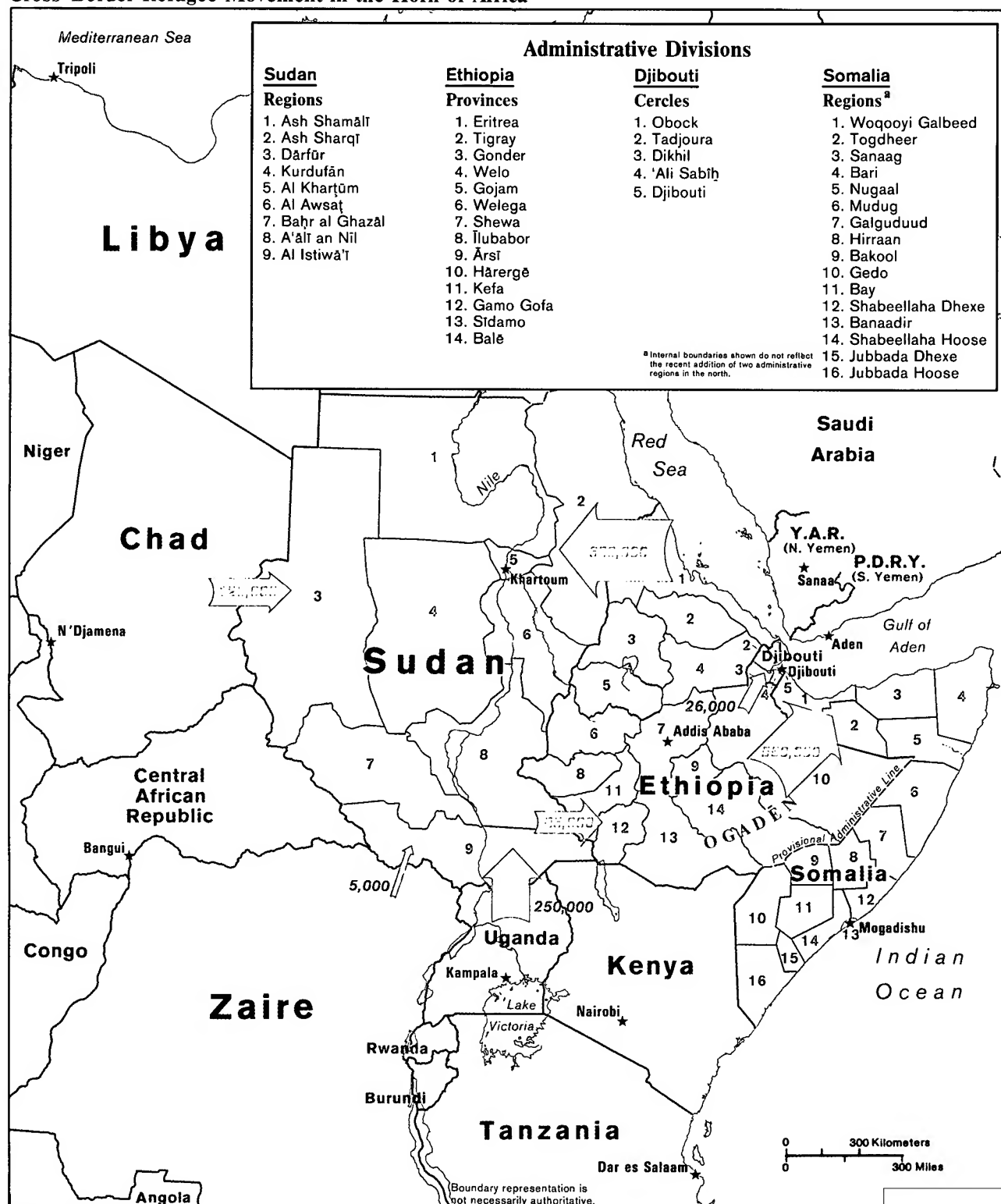
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Figure 1
Cross-Border Refugee Movement in the Horn of Africa



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The Horn of Africa: Famine and Refugee Crisis

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Dimensions of the Crisis In Brief

The impact of the famine that has gripped Ethiopia since mid-1984 in the wake of several years of drought has spread through the Horn, worsening the already serious refugee problems in neighboring Sudan, Djibouti, and Somalia. Over the past 12 months, these states have become reluctant hosts to approximately 400,000 new Ethiopian refugees, adding to the roughly 850,000 Ethiopian refugees who have crossed their borders over the past 20 years, according to estimates by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). We believe that Sudan has approximately 680,000 Ethiopian refugees; Somalia, 550,000; and Djibouti, about 26,000. Ethiopia, in turn, shelters approximately 85,000 Sudanese refugees in a camp in its southwest border region, according to the US Embassy in Addis Ababa.

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The sheer numbers of Ethiopian refugees, the rapidity of their migration this year, and the international press attention this problem has received tend to overshadow the flow of refugees from other nearby states. Sudan, for example, has 250,000 Ugandans, at least 120,000 Chadians, and 5,000 Zairians, according to the UNHCR.

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The approximately 1.7 million refugees now in camps throughout East Africa represent only about one-tenth of the people affected by drought and famine in the region. Almost 8 million Sudanese inside Sudan are in danger of severe malnutrition and death, according to the US Embassy in Khartoum, and 7.7 million Ethiopians within Ethiopia are threatened by famine, according to estimates by the United Nations. The food deficit in these states this year is estimated by US Embassy and relief officials to be approximately 4.6 million tons: 1.95 million in Ethiopia, 2.5 million in Sudan (including 400,000 tons for Ethiopian refugees), and 140,000 in Somalia (120,000 tons for Ethiopian refugees).

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The famine and refugee crisis in the Horn is taking place against a backdrop of bitter political conflict—civil war in northern Ethiopia, insurgency in southern Sudan, and longstanding animosities and distrust between the neighboring states. The high level of regional and internal instability in these countries complicates local as well as internationally based efforts to cope with the crisis.

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Ethiopian Refugees

By any measure, Ethiopian refugees dominate the crisis in the region and have had a substantial impact on Ethiopia's neighbors. Slightly over half of all Ethiopian refugees in the region today are in *Sudan*. Since September 1984 about 250,000 Ethiopian refugees—mainly from the Provinces of Tigray and Eritrea—have been driven into Sudan by drought, famine, and civil war, according to the Government of Sudan and US relief officials. These newcomers, along with an existing Ethiopian refugee population of approximately 430,000, brought the mid-1985 Ethiopian refugee total in Sudan to 680,000, according to US relief officials.

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Sudan has struggled with increasing numbers of Ethiopian refugees since 1962 when Ethiopia's federation was dissolved and many Eritreans began to flee. By 1967, 30,000 Eritreans were refugees in Sudan. The Ethiopian Revolution in 1974 spurred a second wave of Ethiopian refugees into Sudan. This flow has continued without letup, fluctuating in intensity in any given year with the state of the Ethiopian economy and the degree of insurgent and counterinsurgent military activity, and, according to the UNHCR, reached approximately 600,000 as of last year. Many of the earlier groups of refugees settled illegally in urban areas or found their way to rural resettlement

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Estimating Refugees and Populations At Risk

Estimates of the numbers of refugees and "at risk" population are at best approximations. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), usually in collaboration with host governments, provides refugee estimates that are most often used by the international and donor communities. Nevertheless, the chaotic conditions of refugee movements, the political and economic sensitivities weighing on both refugee sending and receiving countries, and the need of donor countries to justify the levels of relief aid provided often precipitate sharp disagreements over the estimates and the perceived "true" numbers. Such is the case in Somalia where the United States and other donors believe refugee estimates reported by the UNHCR and the Somali Government are overestimated by at least 200,000 people.

The numbers of refugees can change rapidly as new influxes occur or as refugees slip away from camps to return home or enter the local populations. These movements are rarely statistically documented amid the turmoil present in refugee camps. When complete or partial head counts are made at a later time, it is seldom possible to account for changes owing to

births, deaths, or movements in the earlier refugee population, thereby calling into question both the earlier and the later numbers.

Estimates of the number of people at risk of death from starvation and related causes are even more imprecise than are refugee numbers. The need to have some reasonable basis on which to plan emergency relief forces the use of these estimates, but they are indicators of the magnitude of the crisis and not exact figures of people in need. Even in the best of circumstances, national population figures are notoriously inconsistent and incomplete, and for lower administrative divisions are statistically even less reliable. Adequate data collection and processing do not exist in many countries, and the figures are often deliberately manipulated by local governments for political purposes. The estimation of subgroups—that proportion at risk of starvation in the total population—from a statistically imprecise national total population number, especially in areas where government involvement is weak, nonexistent, or where insurgencies are occurring, is particularly difficult.

camps under the direction of the Sudanese Government and the UNHCR. Many resettlement communities have become relatively self-sufficient over the years, but the drought conditions and crop failures that occurred in Sudan in 1984 have forced even the resettled Ethiopians to seek emergency help in refugee camps.

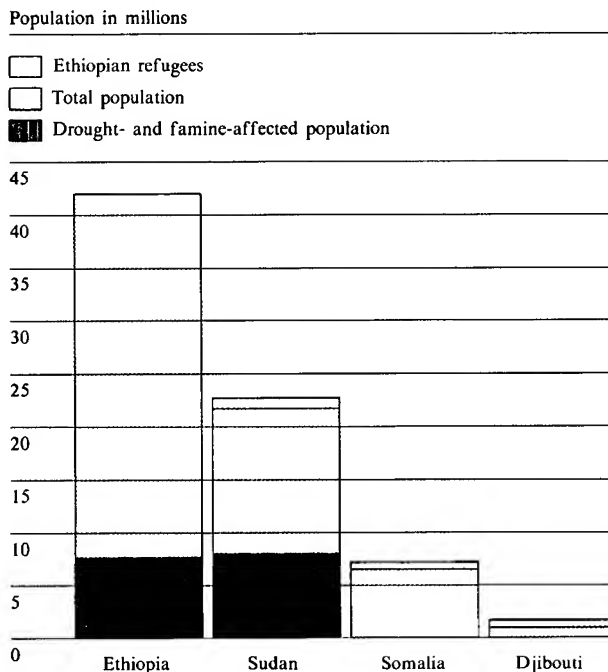
Somalia has received about 45 percent of all Ethiopian refugees, according to estimates by US refugee officials. Nearly 400,000 of these are ethnic Somalis who fled the Ogaden region in 1977-78 during the Ethiopia-Somalia war. Most of the people are still in the 35 camps near the border. A new surge of some 100,000 Ethiopian drought victims poured into Somalia between September 1984 and March 1985, according to registrations made by the UNHCR. Refugee officials estimate that at least 50,000 more refugees have crowded into the existing camps since March.

Djibouti has 16,000 officially registered Ethiopian refugees in camps supervised by international agencies, according to the UNHCR. Most of these people arrived during or after the Ogaden war. According to the US Embassy in Djibouti, these refugees are settled in a camp that has taken on the appearance of a permanent city, with schools and well-defined housing and shopping areas.

Drought and famine in Ethiopian provinces contiguous to Djibouti forced an influx of refugees early this year. Although these new refugees have not been officially registered, local officials estimate that about 10,000 Ethiopians entered Djibouti in the first months of 1985. Most of the newcomers are settled illegally in

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Figure 2
Populations of Ethiopia, Sudan, Somalia, Djibouti, and Ethiopian Refugees, 1985^a



^a All population numbers are approximate. They do not include deaths resulting from drought, famine, and the civil war.

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join the Sudanese dissident groups operating in southern Sudan, according to the US Embassy in Addis Ababa. Nevertheless, we agree with UN officials that the majority of the people—especially the nearly 50,000 who reached the camp during the past year—are genuine refugees who fled southern Sudan in the wake of food shortages and drought. The United Nations expects that the camp population will grow still further as food supplies become more scarce and the fighting continues.

Sudan itself has a large number of non-Ethiopian refugees, according to reports from the US Embassy in Khartoum based on UNHCR data:

- Approximately 250,000 Ugandans are currently registered as refugees in Sudan. The influx of sizable numbers of Ugandans began in 1979 and accelerated greatly in 1982 because of stepped-up fighting in Uganda.
- Chadians have entered Sudan's western regions in two major flights in recent years. Over 20,000 fled the civil war in Chad during the 1979-81 period, but almost all left Sudan and returned to Chad in 1983 when the fighting abated. Since the summer of 1984, approximately 120,000 new refugees fled drought and food shortages in Chad. They live in scattered settlements in Sudan's western regions.
- There are currently 5,000 Zairian refugees in Sudan. About 9,000 entered Sudan's southern region as refugees from Congo (now Zaire) in the mid-1960s. While most returned home in 1969, some of the original group have sought refuge again during the past 15 years.

The Broader Impact

The highly visible and disruptive refugee movements are only one manifestation of the drought-induced famine. When combined with those who have stayed in place, millions of people are affected. The human impact of the crisis has been severe throughout the Horn, with almost all of the countries facing staggering requirements for food and basic care needs. In

a makeshift camp near the border, with some living on the streets of the capital city.

Other Refugees

Looking beyond Ethiopian refugees, however, the broader picture is one of complex population movement in many directions. The flow of refugees in the Horn has been multidirectional, with the paths of numerous Ethiopian and Sudanese refugees often crisscrossing. About 85,000 southern Sudanese are sheltered in a camp run by the UNHCR in Ethiopia's southwest border area, according to the US Embassies in Khartoum and Addis Ababa. In our opinion, some of these people probably are insurgents. Both this year and last, southern Sudanese militants have crossed the border in the area of the refugee camp to

Ethiopia, official aid sources project that famine threatens an estimated 7.7 million. Of this total, nearly half are outside of the aid network. Nearly 50 percent of the 5.6 million famine-affected people in the war-torn northern provinces of Eritrea, Tigray, Welo, and Shewa are out of reach of most international aid donors, according to US relief officials.¹ In addition, scattered reporting from relief workers suggests that about 60 percent of the 1.5 million people at risk in the southern provinces of Harerge, Bale, and Sidamo are not being fed because of the country's wholly inadequate transportation and communications systems and a lack of government interest in their plight. The remaining 600,000 drought victims are scattered throughout other parts of the country.

The food shortfall in Ethiopia for the crop year 1984/85 (1 November 1984–31 October 1985) is expected to reach 1.95 million tons, according to US relief officials. The UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) has issued a preliminary warning to the donor community that the minimum deficit for 1986 will be on the order of 965,000 tons even in the unlikely event that an extremely quick drought recovery were to occur. We see little chance of such a favorable occurrence before the completion of the main planting season at summer's end.

little seed and few tools are available, and thousands of small farmers from the most severely affected areas are still displaced at feeding stations or in refugee camps. We judge, therefore, that the production deficit next year will be as high as it is this year and that Ethiopia will require massive emergency food aid at least through 1986.

The drought in *Sudan* also has reached crisis proportions, with the lives of approximately 8 million Sudanese at risk, according to US officials. Conditions in the western regions are the most severe, with a substantial portion of the population totally dependent on international relief aid for food. Large numbers of Sudanese have left their traditional homes and grazing areas, some joining the refugee settlements with

the Chadian refugees in western Sudan, some with the Ethiopians in the east, and others clustered around population centers looking for food.

Sudan needs 2.5 million tons of grain as emergency food aid this year, according to US and FAO estimates, including 400,000 tons for feeding Ethiopian refugees in camps in eastern Sudan. The bulk of the aid will go to Chadian refugees and Sudanese in the hard-hit western regions.

Sudan is also a central player in the international relief effort to feed some 500,000 famine-stricken people in the northern Ethiopian provinces of Eritrea and Tigray. The food-trucking operations from Sudan to Ethiopia play a key role in the US famine relief program and are aimed in part at stemming the flight of refugees to Sudan,

According to US Embassy reporting, *Somalia* is experiencing isolated pockets of food shortages this year, but conditions are much improved over 1984 when shortages were severe over much of the country. Refugee feeding in Somalia is being accomplished through the World Food Program, which has allocated 120,000 tons of foodstuffs for the estimated 550,000 Ethiopian refugees in the country. This effort has experienced few major distribution problems, in our opinion, owing largely to the close supervision of donor countries. These supplies could fall short if the refugee population is actually larger than current UN estimates or if it grows precipitously. In addition, nearly every year a significant proportion of the local population is short of food for a few months before the harvest in August. The US Embassy in Mogadishu reports that about 500,000 native Somalis are also affected by drought in a few remote northern areas this year. International donors plan to distribute about 20,000 tons of emergency food to them under the auspices of the Somali Government. Aside from this relatively small emergency food distribution to Somalis, indigenous food and commercial food imports will provide for the rest of the population, according to the Embassy.

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The Government of *Djibouti*, with 16,000 long-established refugees and 10,000 Ethiopian drought victims camped illegally within its border, fears the spiraling numbers of Ethiopian refugees will overwhelm and destabilize its small population, according to the US Embassy. Djibouti's indigenous rural population of approximately 72,000 people is already drought afflicted and receives relief aid through development programs administered by the UN Development Program (UNDP). Djibouti is able to provide foodstuffs for the urban population through commercial imports, according to the US Embassy in Djibouti. []

unloading of military cargo from Soviet ships while Western relief shipments wait at sea, according to the US Embassy in Addis Ababa. The regime has resisted pressure from donors to commit both civilian and military trucks to food delivery rather than to use them to support the government's program of resettling farmers on collectivized farms in the south. []

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Beyond the national impact, government decisions on famine and refugee relief are taken in the context of increased tensions throughout the Horn. Ethiopia has historically been at odds with its neighbors, and the present crisis, in our view, has served to worsen these differences. Leaders in Sudan, Somalia, and Djibouti, according to a variety of open-source reporting, tend to believe that the exodus of Ethiopian refugees—sparked not only by the drought but the fighting as well—is intensifying their own internal problems and complicating their relations with Ethiopia. []

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Tensions have been fueled further by differing perceptions of the refugee crisis. Ethiopia contends publicly through the international press []

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[] that relief aid is available to the drought afflicted in Ethiopia and, therefore, that refugee flight largely is an aspect of insurgent activity and less a result of the drought and famine. The receiving countries, however, believe they have no alternative but to accept the refugees even though the new arrivals constitute a potentially destabilizing population that could complicate their own interne-

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Strains on Local Governments

From the perspective of the governments involved, the famine and refugee crisis has created or intensified both domestic and international regional political strains.² Domestically, the crisis has required governments in the Horn—already under considerable economic duress—to allocate significant resources to emergency food and relief programs.³ For example, in order to comply with donors' requests for a reorganized and expanded relief organization, Khartoum found it necessary to assign many of its small cadre of national development officials to coordinate the international effort, according to international relief officials. In addition to human resources, major parts of Sudan's transportation system have also been diverted from domestic operations to the handling of international relief goods. Somalia has also organized a large relief agency that constitutes a major drain on the small pool of able government workers, according to international relief agencies. In addition, resettlement schemes recommended by donors but resisted, according to Embassy reports, by the government are further straining the country's marginal expertise. In the case of Ethiopia, these resource demands are often at odds with internal political interests. Donors have been critical of the priority given by Addis Ababa to the

The Feeding Programs

Despite the level of resource commitments, numerous problems exist in the local feeding programs. While each country faces slightly different blends and intensities of problems, the key differences seem to be:

- The severity of the Ethiopian famine and the unwillingness of Addis Ababa to facilitate the feeding of people in its northern provinces.
- Sudan's growing numbers of starving people in its western regions added to the problems of hosting Ethiopian refugees.

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Problems in Regional Cooperation

Efforts to tackle the refugee problems in the Horn on a collective basis have been limited and sporadic. The return of refugees to home areas with international and national assurances of protection and basic care is, as UN and other international experts note, the ideal solution for all parties. However, organized returns under repatriation agreements demand close working relationships between the sending and receiving countries in order to assure safety and care—conditions that, in our view, demand a higher level of trust and willingness to compromise than the Horn countries have so far exhibited. The repatriation by Djibouti of 15,000 Ethiopian refugees to southern Ethiopian provinces under a 1984 repatriation pact between Ethiopia and Djibouti was only marginally effective, in our judgment. Addis Ababa did not provide the promised food and shelter, according to international refugee officials, and, as a result, Djibouti officials claim that at least two-thirds of the refugees reentered Djibouti in early 1985. Under the present deteriorating food conditions in southern Ethiopia, and with only vague promises between Djibouti and Ethiopia for the responsible handling of the population transfer, according to UNHCR officials, we doubt that a second try at repatriation set for early fall will be any more successful.

over the near term, in our opinion. The Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development in East Africa (IGAAD) was launched by Djibouti, with Kenyan backing, in February 1985 as a platform to discuss regional development programs and long-term solutions to drought. We believe the member states—Djibouti, Kenya, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, and Uganda—will have a difficult time agreeing on a common purpose in this historically hostile region, and, according to the US Embassy in Djibouti, some of the members expressed early doubts about Ethiopia's ability to play a cooperative role in the face of Soviet objections to IGAAD. Success in addressing common environmental and water problems has been elusive for a decade in a similar West African organization (The Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel—CILSS), even though among these states there is a relative homogeneity of culture, language, political, and economic systems, and an absence of serious political disputes, according to the US Embassy in Djibouti. We believe that in IGAAD countries nearly all of these elements are divisive and produce hostile political reactions, thereby adding further complexities to setting and achieving common goals.

More ambitious efforts to develop regional organizations to tackle problems also seem doomed to failure

- Somalia's political exploitation of the refugee situation and a growing weariness with the continuing influx on the part of local populations.
- Djibouti's fear that a growing refugee population will undermine its economic and social stability.

Ethiopia. The deteriorating security situation in the north and the government's sensitivities about allowing outsiders in the area, in our view, combine to undermine the international relief effort.⁴ Based on

Addis Ababa's actions to date in subverting the relief effort, we believe that the Ethiopian Government's primary goal in Tigray and Eritrea is to defeat the longstanding insurgent movements in the north. Since the beginning of the famine relief operation in October 1984, Addis Ababa has not permitted relief organizations working in Ethiopia to operate in the northern contested areas where, according to UN and US relief officials, nearly half of the approximately 5.6 million drought-afflicted people are not receiving food and are now at high risk.

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In our judgment, the exodus of an estimated 250,000 severely malnourished refugees from northern Ethiopia to Sudan between September 1984 and June 1985 is evidence that programs run by the Ethiopian Government in areas under its control and the relatively small cross-border feeding program from Sudan are not meeting the needs of the people in this area. Moreover, the bulk of the drought victims now housed in Sudanese camps come from these severely affected northern provinces, according to the results of surveys taken by relief workers. []

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The government continues to oppose direct aid to peasants in the north, claiming approval would infer legitimacy on the rebels and strengthen the insurgency, according to the US Embassy in Addis Ababa. Further, Addis Ababa objects to the trucking of food by international agencies in the cross-border program on the grounds that it not only violates Ethiopia's territorial integrity but also aids the rebels. The government has insisted publicly and privately that the program must stop, according to press and US Embassy in Addis Ababa reporting. International relief workers report that Ethiopian aircraft have attacked truck convoys and way stations along the relief route. Such incidents, coupled with heavy fighting between government and insurgent forces and logistic problems caused by heavy rains, have temporarily halted the cross-border operation into Tigray, although cross-border feeding programs for Eritrea continue. Even when the cross-border program is fully functioning, international relief officials estimate only 500,000 of the nearly 2-3 million in need can be helped. []

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A further complication this year has been the beginning of a return to Tigray of refugees from the Sudanese camps. According to relief workers in the camps, reports of good early rains induced some 50,000 people to leave Sudan on foot to return to their home villages in Tigray in May, despite warnings from relief organizations of intensive military activity and no food or seed in Tigray. Considering the poor health of the refugees when they left Sudan, the arduous walk for over a month, and the stark conditions in the provinces, a great loss of life was predicted by US and international relief officials. Officials from an international relief organization working in Tigray

told US officials in July that apparently the returnees had reached Tigray and merged into the general population of Tigreans who continue to exist in desperate straits, according to these officials, because of lack of food and the insecurity brought on by the insurgency. []

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Since the beginning of the emergency, US and UN relief officials publicly and privately have urged the Ethiopians to mount a substantial relief operation in the north under international auspices, but they met with little success until late this spring. Ethiopian relief officials are now considering a plan by two international relief agencies to deliver food and relief supplies to some 500,000 people in four northern towns, according to the US Embassy in Addis Ababa. However, US relief officials believe that Ethiopia's slowness to act probably reflects an unwillingness to implement the plan. Even if it is carried out fully, and there is no indication now when this might occur, we judge the impact will be minimal and hundreds of thousands in the north will still be without adequate food supplies. It is reasonable to assume that substantial numbers will continue to go to Sudan while others will become part of the approximately 1 million displaced persons seeking food inside Ethiopia. Even if the administrative hurdles now facing the northern feeding program can be overcome, food deliveries to the north, either through this program, a government scheme, or cross-border from Sudan, are likely to be disrupted if not shut down by continuing military actions. []

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Sudan. Khartoum maintains an open border for refugees, working closely with the Coordinator of UN Activities in Sudan to oversee relief operations through its National Commission for Drought and Desertification. The government that seized power in April has assured international relief organizations that there will be no fundamental change in Sudan's refugee policies, according to the US Embassy in Khartoum. Donors are given a relatively free hand in managing the care of Ethiopian refugees in the eastern regions with the understanding that the growing numbers of Sudanese in need may also enter the camps and receive care along with the refugees. []

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The explosive numbers of Sudanese in the western regions now considered at risk by relief officials—8-9 million Sudanese in addition to some 120,000 Chadian refugees, according to US Embassy reporting—has brought a new dimension to the Sudanese crisis. Isolated geographically and served by few roads and a single rail line made virtually inoperable by heavy rains this summer, the condition of the western population disintegrated quickly over the past few months in spite of warnings in early spring by the United States and the international community that a further crisis was in the making, according to diplomatic reporting. In spite of relief efforts by donors, not enough food was stockpiled before the rains began, and, although frantic efforts are under way to airlift food and repair the washed-out railway and roads, international relief officials fear a great loss of life has already occurred and predict further losses, according to US Embassy reports. The Sudanese Government encourages the work of the relief agencies and is publicly sympathetic to the plight of its people, according to US officials, but, in the wake of the April coup, Khartoum is preoccupied with consolidating its power internally and solving the problems of its southern insurgency, leaving the lion's share of relief management for both refugees and the indigenous population to the international community.

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In addition to internal feeding programs, Khartoum also has to consider cross-border operations. In an apparent attempt to improve relations with Ethiopia and perhaps dissuade Addis Ababa from providing support for the southern insurgents, the new Sudanese Government publicly announced in April that it would not allow the cross-border feeding operations to continue without the consent of the Ethiopian Government. According to US officials, the Sudanese have assured international donors and UN officials that such statements are only for public consumption, and they have not moved to close the border or discontinue refugee programs. Nevertheless, international relief officials note their concern that Khartoum's public statements will seriously undermine their efforts. Diplomatic reporting shows that aid officials also fear that Sudan is becoming less sympathetic toward the plight of refugees and the hungry in Ethiopia as

Sudan's own food crisis increases in scope and severity. We believe that, while Khartoum wants to maintain a favorable international image as a provider of refuge and relief to drought-stricken Ethiopians, it will continue cross-border feeding programs only as long as they do not jeopardize Sudan's fragile relationship with Ethiopia and are not seen domestically as impeding relief programs for the Sudanese in need.

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Somalia. Mogadishu is continuing to use the refugee crisis as a propaganda tool against Addis Ababa. US relief officials believe that the Somali Government saw the refugee problem at its inception in 1977-78 as a means of gaining international assistance to offset the cost of the Ogaden war and rescue Somalia's faltering economy. Mogadishu also views the desire of the mainly ethnic Somali refugees to escape Ethiopian authority as fortifying its irredentist claims to the Ogaden, according to the US Embassy in Somalia.

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The government policy of accepting all refugees and allowing them to stay indefinitely has led to the creation of a semipermanent, dependent population of some 550,000 in the arid border region. Mogadishu keeps refugees isolated from the general population, according to some US Embassy sources, in order to avoid aggravating tribal and political conflicts already bedeviling the north. For several years Somali officials have successfully blocked donor programs to integrate refugees into local Somali communities located in more fertile agricultural areas, according to foreign relief workers, thereby dooming refugees to a long-term artificial camp economy of rations and handouts.

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Somali officials are becoming more critical of the government's policy of accepting all comers, according to reports from the US Embassy in Mogadishu. Water, health, and local government officials object to the establishment of more refugee camps in the northwest region where, according to the US Embassy, one out of every two persons is a refugee. The

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expanding number of sick and poverty-stricken people is probably taking a heavy toll on ill-prepared local authorities, but we think it is unlikely that Mogadishu will back down on its willingness to accept refugees so long as they can be used to enhance Somalia's political goals in the region. []

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Mogadishu continues to disclaim reports by UNHCR and LICROSS (The League of International Red Cross Societies) that 300,000 refugees returned to Ethiopia over the past few years, maintaining that no refugees have been repatriated. The United States and other donors accept the LICROSS and UNHCR reports as evidence of a spontaneous return to Ethiopia of at least some of the refugees and are urging a downward adjustment in refugee aid. []

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Djibouti. While Djibouti is essentially a city-state and feeds its urban population through commercial imports, its small rural population of about 72,000 has been severely drought afflicted for the past several years and has been given food and shelter in the UN-administered Ethiopian refugee camps, according to the US Embassy in Djibouti. The influx of some 10,000 new Ethiopian refugees in the first few months of 1985 escalated Djibouti's concern that the sheer size of the refugee population would overwhelm its fragile infrastructure, according to diplomatic reporting. The concern, however, is centered on Ethiopians, and, in our opinion, Djibouti will allow its own people to remain in the authorized UN camps until they voluntarily return to their home areas. []

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Regionally, the government in Djibouti is attempting to maintain "correct" relations with Ethiopia and Somalia and has avoided taking sides in disputes between them, according to the US Embassy in Djibouti. Government appeals to Addis Ababa have so far gained only promises of increased relief aid to Ethiopia's southern provinces, and the flow of drought victims continues. Djibouti is also concerned about Somalis who enter the country illegally and eventually find their way to refugee camps or become beggars in the capital. As a consequence, according to US Embassy reporting, Djibouti plans to expel by early fall some 10,000 unregistered refugees it claims are illegally inside its borders. This repatriation will take

place under UN supervision, with renewed assurances from Ethiopian and international relief organizations that the returnees will be provided food and shelter in Ethiopia, according to US relief officials. This will mark the first repatriation of drought victims in the present emergency and will be closely watched by the media as well as by other countries that are beginning to plan for an orderly transition of drought victims from camps to agricultural life. A mishandling of this situation, which we believe is likely, could bring Djibouti severe international criticism and discourage such efforts in other countries. []

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How it handles its own refugee population is not the only trouble spot in Djibouti. The use of the port of Djibouti as a principal transfer point for relief supplies is becoming an issue of some concern for both Ethiopia and Djibouti, as well as the donors, according to the US Embassy in Djibouti. Ethiopia continues to put an extremely low priority on moving goods—particularly grain and relief supplies—out of the port. Failure by Ethiopian authorities to supply rolling stock for the jointly owned railroad that connects the port with Ethiopia slowed the movement of goods in June to only 323 tons a day, according to World Food Program officials, well below the estimated maximum capacity of 500 tons. UN figures show that nearly 40,000 metric tons of grain and relief supplies, some delivered as long as six months ago, are stored in the port area. []

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Djiboutian officials suspect Ethiopia of discrediting the port by showing it to be an inefficient expeditor of emergency commodities in order to increase donor support for improvements to its own ports of Assab and Massawa, according to the US Embassy. This year only 8 percent of goods handled in the port have been Ethiopian, according to the US Embassy in Djibouti, compared with an average of 40 to 45 percent in recent years. Although local newspapers reported that discussions on the port and other economic matters between Djiboutian and Ethiopian trade officials in late April and mid-May had gone well and led to agreement on strengthening and expanding cooperation, by late May international

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donors were asked by the World Food Program relief managers to suspend shipments to Djibouti because no goods were moving out of the port. []

Outlook and Implications for the United States

We agree with UN officials who believe overall prospects for 1986 in the drought-stricken countries of the Horn are somewhat brighter than in 1985, although crisis conditions will still prevail in most areas of Ethiopia and Sudan. The rains this year, according to UN and US meteorologists, have been the best the region has seen for many years, and agricultural conditions should be favorable for the October-December harvest period. While crop yields should be better than last year, seed and implement shortages will seriously impede the acreage planted, keeping national food deficits high, according to international relief and agricultural experts. Nevertheless, relief organizations and donors are buoyed by the prospect of better growing conditions and are doing preliminary planning in order to turn resources from emergency to recovery aid, []

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Against this backdrop, we believe Ethiopia will remain the center of the famine and refugee crisis in the Horn for the next few years at least, and the unstable situation in the north is likely to continue. We doubt the government will yield over the near term on its contention that refugee flows from Tigray and Eritrea are a cover for insurgents or that a widespread feeding program for civilians in rebel-held areas would confer legitimacy on them. We expect Addis Ababa will continue to dismiss as politically motivated and hostile most expressions of outside concern for the famine-ridden people in the north and the humanitarian problems now faced by countries housing Ethiopian refugees. []

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At the same time, the economic stringencies facing Mengistu, we believe, will force Addis Ababa to selectively allocate resources, choosing between politically important urban and military constituencies on the one hand and the rural population on the other. We judge food needs and other necessities for the military and major urban areas will continue to

receive priority over agricultural rehabilitation and food relief in the countryside. Exceptions would likely be made for high-profile ventures like the peasant resettlement schemes in the south. Further, the forced movement of peasants from the north probably will tie some refugees to the camps but will force others, as we have already seen, to flee the country. We expect that the combined effects of continuing food shortages, government resettlement efforts, and intensified insurgent actions in the northern provinces will spur a second flight of refugees in the fall of 1985 when the rains stop. Perhaps not as many will flee as the 400,000 who did in the past year, but even half that number would add significant burdens to the receiving countries, in our opinion. []

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Over the next year any significant influx of new Ethiopian refugees would likely add further stress on the fragile administrative and social structures in Sudan, Somalia, and Djibouti—offsetting any relief that better domestic conditions might bring. This, in turn, probably would increase the growing regional impatience with Ethiopia's inability to keep its refugees at home. Even so, we doubt that these neighboring countries would take any meaningful political or economic action against Ethiopia, however, preferring not to provoke their larger and stronger neighbor. Such circumstances would only increase regional appeals to the international community for further emergency aid. []

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As the food crisis in the Horn lessens and refugee populations begin to stabilize—possibly over the next year or two—we judge that donors will require Ethiopia, Sudan, Somalia, and Djibouti to shoulder some of the responsibility for planning long-term, comprehensive solutions for refugees, rather than concentrating solely, as they are now, on emergency and custodial care. The smaller countries, Somalia and Djibouti, are likely to balk at permanent resettlement of large numbers of refugees in their countries and would appeal, however unsuccessfully, to Ethiopia to take most of them back. Sudan, which has had more experience and some success in resettling Ethiopian

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refugees, might consider resettlement of large numbers, but its own food shortages and rising Sudanese resentment against refugees will make permanent resettlement on a substantial scale politically difficult.



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The international community and the countries in the Horn will look to the United States to play a major role in international relief efforts, operating through the United Nations and its agencies and as a direct aid donor. However, a highly visible US stand in support of feeding programs in northern Ethiopia and increased cross-border programs from Sudan would likely be met with strong criticism from Mengistu. Addis Ababa is already suspicious of US intentions and would see this as providing direct support for the rebels. We believe a prolonged or an increasingly high US profile in Sudan's food and refugee program probably add to Mengistu's concerns. We are concerned, moreover, that the uncertain grip on power of Sudan's new leaders will increase the chances of Khartoum's closing its borders to refugees or expelling at least some refugees, either of which would undermine the basis of US emergency support. In the other countries of the region, US assistance will not be so politically charged. Nonetheless, both Somalia and Djibouti probably are counting on the United States to provide even more emergency aid to support their growing refugee populations and at least an equal increase in development aid to pacify their own increasingly restive populations.



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